

2025-27 State Budget Request

Growing Our Future Workforce

Supporting Qualified Treatment Trainees & Peer Specialists

Expanding support and coverage for in-training therapists and certified peer specialists will promote job growth and increased access in behavioral health.

Addressing the mental health and substance use treatment needs of Wisconsin requires an array of practitioners, including psychiatrists, mental health therapists, peer specialists, and others. **We need to widen the pool of supportive, billable professionals.**

What We Need to Grow Our Workforce



Increase funding for the QTT grant program by at least \$3 million to expand the pool of clinicians providing essential services in Wisconsin.

- Agencies that hire and supervise licensed master's level clinicians as qualified treatment trainees (QTTs) incur costs for supporting these practitioners.
- QTTs require enhanced supervision and training, while also serving a reduced caseload, leaving the agency to fund the balance of their salary.
- With enhanced federal funding in 2023-24, the program provided more than \$9 million in grant support for hundreds of qualified providers and clinics across the state.

Wisconsin's **entry rate of in-training therapists is not keeping pace with projected employment growth** for behavioral health clinicians. Rates of new clinicians has been relatively flat compared to a projected growth of 18% (BLS, 2023).

The QTT grant program supports the next generation of master's-level mental health therapists. The program has enabled agencies to employ hundreds of new practitioners, targeting traditionally underserved populations and regions of the state (UW-Whitewater, 2022).



Advance timely access to care by including peer specialists as a basic Medicaid benefit & require all insurers to cover peer services.

- **Certified Peer Specialists** are professionals who use their personal lived experience to provide support to others and demonstrate that recovery is possible.
- Currently, Medicaid has **limited coverage** for peer specialists, and private insurers generally **do not cover** these key contributors to the mental health treatment team.

The pool of certified peer specialists continues to grow. Supporting these professionals with fair wages and benefits requires **equitable levels of insurance reimbursement.**

Forty states cover peer specialists in their Medicaid programs, and more than twenty report no limits on the services. Meanwhile Wisconsin Medicaid currently limits reimbursement for peers to CCS and select substance use treatment programs (KFF, 2022).